

Introduction

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The present Issue of Cytotechnology presents a selection of papers by Italian Institutions, delivered at recent meetings on biology and applications of stem cells held in Milan and Pavia (respectively, Eurostells meeting in October 2007 and AICC meeting in March 2008).

It is clear from these contributions that research on stem cells is in a state of intense activity in Italy, ranging from basic approaches about stem cell sources and features to their possible practical use. Of particular interest are the studies on cells obtained by so called “somatic” tissues, from the placenta to foetal vessels: a wide spectrum of differentiated cells can apparently be obtained from such sources, thus circumventing problems related to the acquisition and handling of embryonic stem cells.

It is also worth mentioning the close attention given to cancer stem cells, which apparently play a major role in the initiation and maintenance of neoplastic conditions and are also becoming a preferential target for cancer therapy.

The best success story for stem cells is, of course, bone marrow transplantation, which has been going on for many years, extending its area of application to non-haemopoietic disorders: one such example is given by its recent use in congenital osteopetrosis, as shown in the last paper of this issue.

Altogether, we are grateful to the Scientists who have contributed to the Issue, providing a necessarily partial, but interesting view on Research in Progress in this area.

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